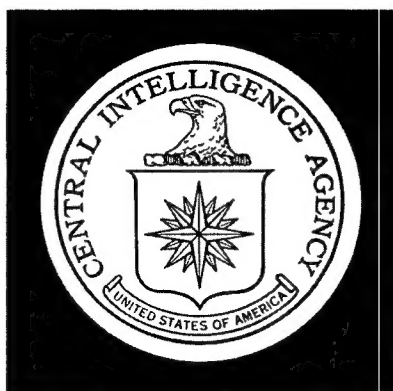


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DIRECTORATE OF
INTELLIGENCE

MEMORANDUM

The Situation in Vietnam

State Department review completed

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Top Secret

13 November 1966

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Approved For Release 2004/11/03 : CIA-RDP79T00826A001400010039-8

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Information as of 1600
13 November 1966

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HIGHLIGHTS

Only light contact was reported over the weekend between elements of the 18-battalion allied force participating in Operation ATTLEBORO and Viet Cong troops in central Tay Ninh Province. The South Vietnamese tribal autonomy group leader has set forth a new and unreasonable set of demands which must be met before his group will submit to the authority of the Saigon government.

I. The Military Situation in South Vietnam:
Only light contact is reported as 18 battalions of allied troops continue to sweep central Tay Ninh Province (Para. 1). Following a heavy mortar attack, two battalions of Communist troops attacked elements of the US 4th Infantry Division in southwestern Kontum Province yesterday (Paras. 2-3). A small Viet Cong force attacked a US Marine unit south of Da Nang, causing heavy casualties of 14 killed and 32 wounded (Paras. 4-5). Viet Cong terrorists may be planning an intensive country-wide campaign of terror and sabotage, [REDACTED]

25X1

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II. Political Developments in South Vietnam:
The leader of the dissident tribal autonomy movement, FULRO, has levied a new set of extreme demands as his price for FULRO's return to government jurisdiction (Paras. 1-2). The GVN appears to be continuing to delay implementing the National Reconciliation program (Para. 3). At a recent meeting of the Peoples-Army Council, Premier Ky announced that the resignations of two of the dissident southern ministers had been accepted (Paras. 4-6). Dr. Phan Quang Dan is sanguine about the development of the Constituent Assembly as a political forum (Paras. 7-8).

III. Military Developments in North Vietnam:
Five planes were lost over North Vietnam on 11 November. One pilot was rescued, and six are listed as missing (Paras. 1-3).

IV. Other Communist Military Developments:
There is nothing of significance to report.

V. Communist Political Developments: Soviet leaders make standard statements on Vietnam to departing Ambassador Kohler (Paras. 1-3).

25X1

SPECIAL ANNEX: The Communist Situation in Tay Ninh Province (Paras. 1-17).

25X1

13 November 1966



I. THE MILITARY SITUATION IN SOUTH VIETNAM

1. Light contact continues between elements of the 18-battalion allied force participating in Operation ATTLEBORO and Viet Cong troops in central Tay Ninh Province. No heavy fighting has been reported during the past several days. However, additional Communist food and munition caches have been discovered as allied troops continue to sweep the area near War Zone "C" north of Tay Ninh city. Another half million pounds of rice were located on 13 November in an enemy supply area that also contained various small arms, munitions, and communication supplies.

2. Three companies of the US 4th Infantry Division participating in Operation PAUL REVERE IV in Kontum and Pleiku provinces received approximately 500-600 rounds of mortar fire in the afternoon of 12 November--one of the heaviest mortar attacks of the war. This action flared 17 miles west of the Plei Djereng Special Forces Camp in Kontum Province near the Cambodian border. Immediately following the mortar attack, a large Communist force--estimated at two battalions--attacked the American positions.

3. The American troops replied with artillery, tactical air strikes, and ground attacks which accounted for at least 40 enemy soldiers killed and two captured. Initial reports show American casualties as six killed, 21 wounded, and three missing.

4. Early on 12 November, an estimated 25 Viet Cong guerrillas infiltrated a US Marine defensive position at An Trach, seven miles south of Da Nang in Quang Nam Province. In the ensuing hour-long battle in heavy rain, the Viet Cong used small arms, grenades, and satchel charges at close range, killing 14 Americans and one South Vietnamese soldier. A total of 32 US and ARVN were wounded. Only three Viet Cong were killed.

13 November 1966

I-1

5. The action may have been in retaliation for an 11 November US Marine attack in the same area in which 16 Communist soldiers were killed and 2,000 pounds of rice were seized.

Viet Cong Terrorist Activities

6. [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] the Central Office for South Vietnam (COSVN) has directed that an intensified sabotage and terrorist campaign be organized. [REDACTED] a few large-scale sabotage and terrorist attacks are to be conducted during November as a prelude to a country-wide campaign which is to begin in December. Guerrillas in the Saigon area have already completed reconnaissance of selected targets, such as US and South Vietnamese military installations. This is the first report of a COSVN-directed, country-wide effort since the Constituent Assembly elections last September.

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25X1

7. Early on 13 November, Viet Cong guerrillas destroyed a 100-yard-long concrete bridge five miles north of Saigon. A few minutes earlier, the Viet Cong attacked a police station in the northern part of the city, killing two South Vietnamese.

13 November 1966

I-2

25X

II. POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS IN SOUTH VIETNAM

25X1

1. [redacted] Y Bham Enuol, leader of the dissident tribal autonomy movement FULRO, has levied a new and extreme set of demands as his price for FULRO's return to government jurisdiction. These new demands include allowing the tribal peoples to establish their own governing body in Ban Me Thuot, with Y Bham as its chief. The montagnards must be permitted their own flag, armed forces, and police, as well as to be allowed to conduct their own education and to administer montagnard justice in legal matters. Personal property and real estate must be transferred from Vietnamese to montagnard administration. Finally, Y Bham wants a montagnard to attend the next international conference on Vietnam. The demands concerning the new governing body, flag, armed forces, and police must go into effect immediately after signing the agreements, whereas the others may be delayed for one year from the signing date.

2. The GVN views the new demands of FULRO as unreasonable, but the belief of the Special Commissariat for Montagnard Affairs (SCMA) officials is that they can be toned down and still satisfy Y Bham.

Further Delay in the National Reconciliation Program

3. In conversations with embassy officials, Colonel Anh, who has been designated by minister of information General Nguyen Bao Tri to be in charge of all aspects of the National Reconciliation effort, observed that although the US considered the program to be settled policy, it was not yet so on the GVN side. He maintained that although general approval had been indicated for the program at Manila and both Ky and Thieu were enthusiastic about it in conversations with Tri and Anh, the concept was not yet circulated and established throughout the GVN. Although confident that the plan would be accepted as national policy, Anh warned that the US should keep its thinking and action in step with that of the GVN, and not outstrip it.

13 November 1966

II-1

Cabinet Crisis Resolved

4. At the 11 November meeting of the Peoples-Army Council, the 79-member government advisory body, Prime Minister Ky announced the acceptance of the resignations of two dissident ministers, Youth Minister Trieu and Education Minister Truong. The resignation of Minister of Economy Thanh, also one of the dissident group of ministers, was accepted late in October. No replacements for the departing ministers were named by Ky.

5. Ky also revealed that Minister of Labor Hung and Minister of Communications Thuan have agreed to stay on in the cabinet. Although not specifically mentioned, Deputy Prime Minister Vien and Social Affairs Minister Lieng, who were also among the rebellious ministers, presumably have agreed to stay on.

6. This action should serve to remove the cabinet as a focal point of north-south regional friction for the time being. However, southern extremists will continue to be concerned about the concentration of almost all the important government power in the hands of a few northerners.

Constituent Assembly Developments

7. Dr. Phan Quang Dan, deputy in the Constituent Assembly, recently told embassy officials that he was pleased with the progress of the assembly despite a lack of strong official leadership. He was most encouraged by the freedom of debate allowed, which he said was unprecedented in the history of Vietnamese political institutions. In his view the assembly, if allowed to continue, will be instrumental in changing the nature of Vietnamese political protest from street demonstrations and secret plotting to open debate and exchange of views between the government and its critics. He was also confident that the assembly could come to a mutually satisfactory agreement over the controversial Article 20 of Decree Law 21 that gives the government veto power over assembly actions.

13 November 1966

II-2

25X1

8. Dan also said that the assembly was in the process of regrouping into two large blocs which will include almost all deputies. The embassy comments that Dan's prediction of the settling of the assembly into two large blocs is possible but by no means a certain development at this time. It is also doubtful that blocs will prove to be very cohesive or able to maintain discipline over their members when the assembly begins to vote on the constitutional issues.

13 November 1966

II-3

25X1

US AIRCRAFT LOSSES - 11 NOVEMBER 1966



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III. MILITARY DEVELOPMENTS IN NORTH VIETNAM

1. Five US aircraft--four jets and a prop-driven Skyraider--were shot down by Communist ground fire over North Vietnam on 11 November. One American pilot was rescued; a total of six pilots have been listed as missing.

2. A US Air Force F-105 was downed about 30 miles north of the port city of Haiphong. The location of the downed aircraft made rescue efforts for the pilot impossible. A pair of Air Force F-4C jets were downed by enemy ground fire while attacking a target just north of the DMZ. Rescue efforts for the four crew members were halted due to heavy enemy ground fire in the area. A US Marine F-8E and a US Air Force A-1E Skyraider were also hit by ground fire in the area south of Dong Hoi. The Marine pilot was not recovered, but the A-1E pilot was rescued in good condition.

3. These losses, on a day when bad weather limited the raids on North Vietnam to about half the usual number, were two less than the record number of US aircraft lost over North Vietnam on 7 August of this year.

13 November 1966

III-1

IV. OTHER COMMUNIST MILITARY DEVELOPMENTS

1. There is nothing of significance to report.

13 November 1966

IV-1

25X1

V. COMMUNIST POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS

1. in his farewell call on Soviet officials, departing US Ambassador to the Soviet Union Foy Kohler received Moscow's standard line on Vietnam. Speaking with First Deputy Chairman Polyansky on 10 November, Kohler was told that Vietnam "cast a shadow on US-Soviet relations" and that the responsibility for finding a solution to the war rested solely on the US. Polyansky warned of the dangers of increased US and Soviet involvement in the war and ruled out the possibility of a military solution, but emphasized that "the USSR and other socialist countries would respond to any US escalation with increased aid to North Vietnam."

2. On the question of possible negotiations, Polyansky asserted that "the best" basis for a settlement continued to rest on the positions outlined by Hanoi and the Liberation Front in their respective four- and five-point statements. Additionally, the Soviet leader re-emphasized the Soviet assertion that neither the North Vietnamese nor the Viet Cong would engage in negotiations as long as the bombing continued.

3. A cessation of the bombings as a necessity for any negotiations was also stressed by Presidium Chairman Podgorny in his conversation with Ambassador Kohler the following day. Covering much of the same ground as Polyansky, Podgorny discounted the results of the Manila Conference and asserted that the "US should prove its sincerity by deeds rather than words." Podgorny claimed that he could not speak for North Vietnam, but asserted that some real step by the US--such as a cessation of bombing--would make it easier for others to believe that the US was truly sincere in its quest for peace.

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13 November 1966

V-1

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25X1

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Approved For Release 2004/11/03 : CIA-RDP79T00826A001400010039-8

ANNEXThe Communist Situation in
Tay Ninh Province

1. Operation ATTLEBORO--the largest allied military thrust so far in the war--is probing into one of the most significant of all the Communist strongholds in South Vietnam. In the northern portion of Tay Ninh Province lies the Communists' so-called "War Zone C," the heartland of the enemy's military and political control apparatus in the South. It is protected by dense forests and, in some areas, by thick underbrush as well, thus providing almost perfect cover for Communist installations and troop concentrations. Until US operations BIRMINGHAM in April and the current ATTLEBORO moved into the area, it had been virtually uncontested Communist territory since the days of the Viet Minh struggle against the French.

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13 November 1966

A-1

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25X1

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Approved For Release 2004/11/03 : CIA-RDP79T00826A001400010039-8

Viet Cong Problems in Tay Ninh

7. Although the Communists have developed a heavily defended stronghold in Tay Ninh, they cannot be said to dominate the province totally. Much of the populace of some 235,000 resides in the southern part of the province or near Tay Ninh city or in a few other relatively urban centers and is thus subject to government control to some extent. There are government army elements stationed in the urban centers. The government claims that some 69 percent of the populace resides in "secured" areas, while another 14 percent is undergoing securing and only 3.7 percent is in the hands of the Viet Cong. While these figures appear optimistic, there have been indications that the Viet Cong are finding the going in Tay Ninh harder than before.

8. Perhaps the most striking evidence of this appeared in the resolution of the Tay Ninh Provincial Committee's military conference, held in mid-1966. This captured document revealed serious problems in motivating the population to "participate in the national salvation war." It also revealed morale deficiencies among Communist troops in the area because of fear of air strikes and artillery shellings and, most importantly, it disclosed a dire manpower shortage throughout the province. These shortcomings, according to the resolution, have resulted in a severely impaired combat capability. Local military units cannot sustain continuous combat and there are not enough troops for an effective dispersal of units throughout the province.

13 November 1966

A-3

25X1

9. Hamlet and village guerrilla units, according to the document, have been the most seriously affected by the manpower deficiencies. By the end of 1965 they had decreased to fewer than 800 troops from an early 1965 strength of 1,150. Self-defense militia units have also decreased greatly, to the point where "militiamen in the province have almost disappeared," and district and other local force units are also undermanned. The Viet Cong attribute these difficulties to the increase in allied forces--which have presumably taken potential recruits away from the Viet Cong--to the intensification of allied operations and air strikes, and to GVN revolutionary development activities.

10. Other captured documents have yielded evidence of Viet Cong concern with GVN Chieu Hoi operations in Tay Ninh aimed at attracting defectors from the Communists. A document captured in mid-September complained that the GVN had been successful in some instances in capitalizing on the cadres' and troops' fear of combat and death. Two other documents dating from early 1966 point up Viet Cong difficulties in recruiting and keeping civilian laborers in Tay Ninh because of hardship and the laborers' fear of being killed by air strikes. According to one of these documents several deserters

warned potential recruits to avoid conscription into civilian labor groups, telling them of the hardships encountered in the VC ranks. The Tay Ninh military proselyting section in December 1965 observed in addition that the morale of the masses had been "considerably lowered" by allied activities, including B-52 strikes.

13 November 1966

A-4

The Effects of the B-52s

11. These air strikes have been a major factor in disrupting Viet Cong activities in Tay Ninh, causing both an upheaval in the conduct of military operations and a lowering of Viet Cong morale. Tay Ninh has been the most frequent target of B-52 strikes--more than 20 percent of those conducted in South Vietnam have been directed against the province--and a number of cadres and troops, according to a variety of captured documents, have deserted or "become politically inactive" because of the strikes. Viet Cong units have, in addition, been forced to move at night to avoid the strikes, and food supplies have been greatly depleted as a result of both air strikes and ground sweeps. The Rear Services Staff of the Communist military region which includes Tay Ninh reported in January that food supplies were sometimes so low that Viet Cong units in the region were unable to provide for their troops and cadres.

Operation ATTLEBORO

12. Although they are probably still suffering from serious handicaps and the loss of popular support, the indications are that the Communists in Tay Ninh had been able to recover some of their equilibrium in the few months since the publication of the above documents, primarily through the movement back into the province of the Viet Cong 9th Light Infantry Division. Reports indicate, however, that the enemy was still concerned by the sizable buildup of US forces in the Tay Ninh area which began in October and by the fear that allied units would further disrupt the communications-liaison-infiltration channels between COSVN and major Communist elements to the south in the delta.

13. The US buildup opened as Operation ATTLEBORO on 14 October with one battalion of the US 196th Infantry Brigade committed to a local search-and-destroy mission northwest of Tay Ninh city. An additional battalion was committed a few days later

13 November 1966

A-5

[REDACTED]

and the area of the action expanded, but no significant enemy contact was established through 3 November. On 4 November, however, Communist forces, possibly hoping to force a withdrawal by the US units in the field, launched a series of mortar attacks on the base camp of the 196th Brigade and other allied installations in the vicinity of Tay Ninh city. Shortly afterward some 800 Viet Cong hit two outposts in a South Vietnamese district headquarters complex southeast of the city.

14. After three hours of heavy fighting, during which the enemy lost 50 killed, the attacking force withdrew to the north. Later in the day, elements of the 196th and Vietnamese Special Forces units re-established heavy contact with battalion-sized or larger Viet Cong forces 10 to 20 miles northeast of Tay Ninh city. It was in this area that the Communists were to suffer their heaviest casualties.

15. Sixteen US Army battalions from the 1st and 25th Infantry divisions, the 196th Infantry Brigade, and the 173rd Airborne Brigade were subsequently committed to the fast-developing tactical situation. After nearly a week of sustained contact with large-scale Communist forces entrenched in heavily fortified bunkers and caves in this area, which borders on the southern periphery of War Zone "C," US forces claimed to have killed 920 of the enemy. American casualties stood at 80 killed, 375 wounded, and five missing.

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[REDACTED]

that major elements of the 271st, 272nd, and 273rd Viet Cong regiments--the three major subordinates of the Viet Cong's 9th Division--may have been initially deployed to counter US forces participating in ATTLEBORO. [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED]

13 November 1966

A-6

The reported capture of an NVA captain belonging to the 101st in Tay Ninh would tend to confirm its presence there. It is probable that at least elements of these enemy main force units have borne the brunt of the casualties thus far inflicted by ATTLEBORO.

17. The Communists probably view this operation, which has already resulted in the destruction of numerous base camps and in the seizure of enough rice to feed an entire division for a year, as a serious threat to War Zone "C." What counteraction they now plan cannot be foreseen in detail. It is possible that most of the encounters of the past few days have been intended by the Communists mainly as holding actions to delay the movement of allied forces into the war zone while Communist elements are evacuated, probably to Cambodia. Major clashes could still occur, however, if the allies can spot and corner substantial Communist units or if the enemy sees a chance to trap or ambush an allied force.

13 November 1966

25X1

A-7

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